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Release date: May 11, 2005
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NEVADA DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEWS RELEASE

TOXIC RELEASE INVENTORY IN NEVADA: 2003 Public Data Release

CARSON CITY— The US Environmental Protection Agency has released data contained in the 2003 annual Toxic Release Inventory (TRI). This 'community right to know' law is designed to provide citizens with information about chemicals used, processed, manufactured or released from facilities in their communities. A facility is subject to TRI reporting requirements if it has 10 or more employees and handles any of the listed toxic chemicals in amounts exceeding specified threshold quantities. In Nevada, 111 facilities submitted reports of 2003 TRI releases.

While the TRI program provides a big picture indication of toxic releases, there are limitations to the usefulness of the data. The term "release" includes emissions to the air and discharges to water that are regulated by State and Federal environmental permits. "Releases" to land include off-site disposal in fully permitted and engineered hazardous waste disposal facilities, such as the US Ecology facility near Beatty, NV. It is also difficult to make year to year comparisons of TRI data due to changes in reporting requirements. For example, Nevada's reported TRI releases increased dramatically from the 1997 to 1998 reporting years due to the change in reporting that required metal mines to report as releases the naturally occurring metals found in tailings and waste rock.

"Once you look below the surface of these numbers, there are no big surprises" said Leo Drozdoff, Administrator for the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection. "Releases to land seem large but primarily represent small amounts of metals contained in large quantities of mine tailings and waste rock, which we regulate. Even when you look at mercury releases, there are no surprises. The figures show decreases in releases to air from the prior year and an increase in the release to land that is attributable to increases in mining activity and the amount of tailings and waste rock generated during the reporting period" Drozdoff said.

Since metal mining was first required to report TRI releases beginning in 2000, the figures that attracted the attention of the US EPA and NDEP were air emissions of mercury. Those reports prompted US EPA Region IX and NDEP to develop a Voluntary Mercury Reduction Program, in partnership with the mining industry. *"The TRI air emissions numbers for mercury from mining raised concerns,"* Director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Allen Biaggi said. *"There was no federal standard for mercury, yet this voluntary program has achieved significant reductions in mercury emissions from mining operations in Nevada."* The State, US EPA IX and the industry are committed to ensuring further mercury reductions under this unique partnership.

"Had we followed the traditional approach of establishing standards through the Maximum Achievable Control Technology regulatory process we would likely not have seen the benefit of reduced emissions that we see today" said Mike Elges, NDEP Chief of Air Pollution Control.

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